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Elysium: The Art of the Film

By Brian Eggert | August 6, 2013

Every so often, an “art of” book comes along and makes me want to revisit the film itself and watch solely for the designs. Such is the case with a release in which the film’s director, Neill Blomkamp, specifically states he set out to explore the visual aspects of his story more than the sociological implications, a surprising notion considering the picture’s central theme. As we learn in the book, when he originally proposed the film Blomkamp put together 50-60 images he created on his computer and set them against the screenplay, creating a kind of graphic novel for investors and his actors. On the strength of these images—not to mention the strength of his first film, *District 9*—he garnered himself a \$100 million budget and signed stars Matt Damon and Jodie Foster.

Set in the year 2154, the setup involves a space station called “Elysium” that orbits Earth and houses only the privileged who can afford to live there, while below on the planet’s surface is a ravaged Third World

suffering from overpopulation, famine, and disease. An industrial accident leaves lowly factory worker Max (Damon) with just five days to live, and so he embarks on a mission to get passed strict anti-immigration enforcement and be cured in one of Elysium's instant-cure stations. Armed with a hydraulic exoskeleton, Max faces Elysium's ruthless Secretary of Defense (Foster) and her black ops agent Kruger (Sharlto Copley). The resulting film has been widely criticized for its paper thin political commentary, yet praised for Blomkamp's visual style.



Elysium: The Art of the Film is a testament to what works about the film. Available now from Titan Books in both a standard and a Limited Edition, the contains full page images showcasing the level of detail Blomkamp, production designer Phil Ivey, the team at Weta Workshop, and even legendary concept artist Syd Mead (*Aliens*, *Blade Runner*, and *TRON*). Each release contains more than 164 pages of full color concept art, drawings, paintings, movie stills, and informative text by author Mark Salisbury. The Limited Edition features a black slipcase with an image of Elysium on one side the ruined Earth on the other, a signature plate signed by Blomkamp, and a print by Mead.

Inside the book is the story of *Elysium* both on and offscreen. In interviews with the cast and crew, but mostly Blomkamp, Salisbury follows the film from inception to execution, detailing the director's origins for the film's diptych world and how he set out to create it. "Blomkamp's more interested in making muscular slice of popular cinema than preachy parables," Salisbury writes. We can see this in fascinating detail he incorporates into the Los Angeles favela and its population rich with tattoos, futuristic logos, and policing robots. One of the most charming details from the film is Max's "parole officer"—an automated, prerecorded sentry with no personality resembling a character of the McDonald's variety.

"Essentially I'm making fun of the First World," Blomkamp remarks, which may be why Foster's character seems almost cartoonishly and inexplicably evil—a point that, for me anyway, was a frustrating quality about *Elysium*. And yet, taking the picture as a bloody satire, something more like *Total Recall* than *District 9*, the director's vision becomes clearer. Throughout the book, there's a sense that Blomkamp was simply having fun creating these diametrically opposed worlds and filling them with fascinating details. Every artist's rendering of robots, vehicles, hardware, weaponry, and futurist architecture has an almost cartoonish inspiration which will only help the somewhat disappointed viewer appreciate the film on an entirely different level. In fact, *Elysium: The Art of the Film* may be essential reading to readjust one's expectations of *Elysium* from a *District 9*-level sociological allegory to the living comic book it proves to be.

Thanks to Titan Books for sending a review copy of the book. Order it from [Titan's website](#).

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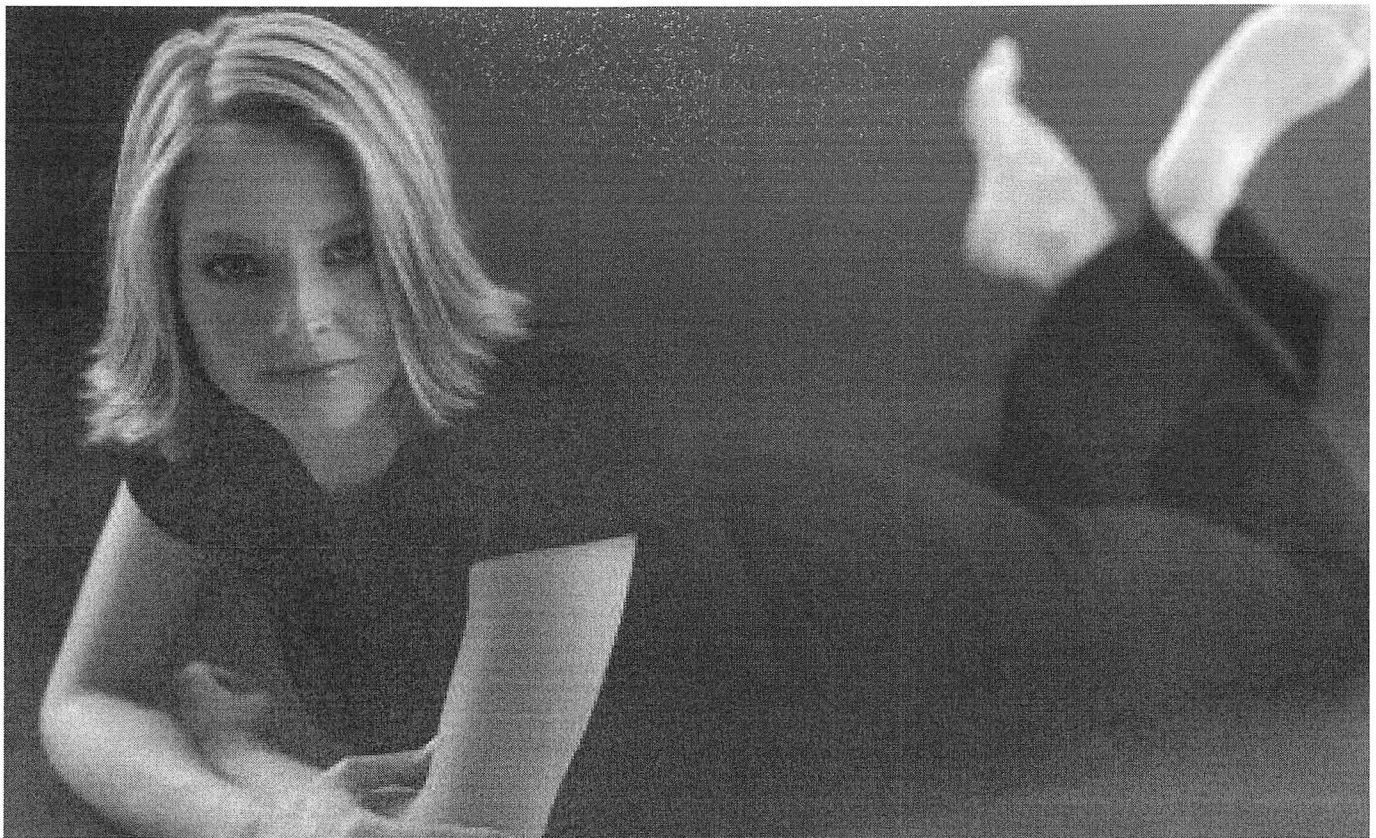


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Jodie Foster reveals details about Neill Blomkamp's *Elysium*

By Joshua Winning April 27, 2011 News

"I don't even own a screenplay"



Jodie Foster has been doing the promotional rounds on *The Beaver* this week, which means the press have been attempting to milk her for details about new sci-fi *Elysium*.

The sophomore feature from *District 9* director Neill Blomkamp, the project is pretty much under lock and key, with only the basic plot (humans vs. aliens) being released.

Foster did, however, confirm that her character is the head of an alien planet: "Yes. I hope I'm allowed to say that. I think I'm allowed to say that. That's pretty vague."

Asked if there was anything else she could reveal about the much-anticipated movie, Foster added: "Those sci-fi movies are all really hush-hush. I don't even own a screenplay."

"They won't even give me a screenplay. I've read it, but they won't give me one to physically keep in my home 'cause they're so worried about everybody."

Finally, Foster revealed that the main reason she signed on to the film was because it was a chance to work with Blomkamp.

"Yes, definitely. He did *District 9*, which I think is as close to a perfect movie as you can get," she enthuses. "It's just an extraordinary film. And, this film has a lot of that social commentary in it, but uses sci-fi to get there. It's great."

The Beaver opens 17 June.

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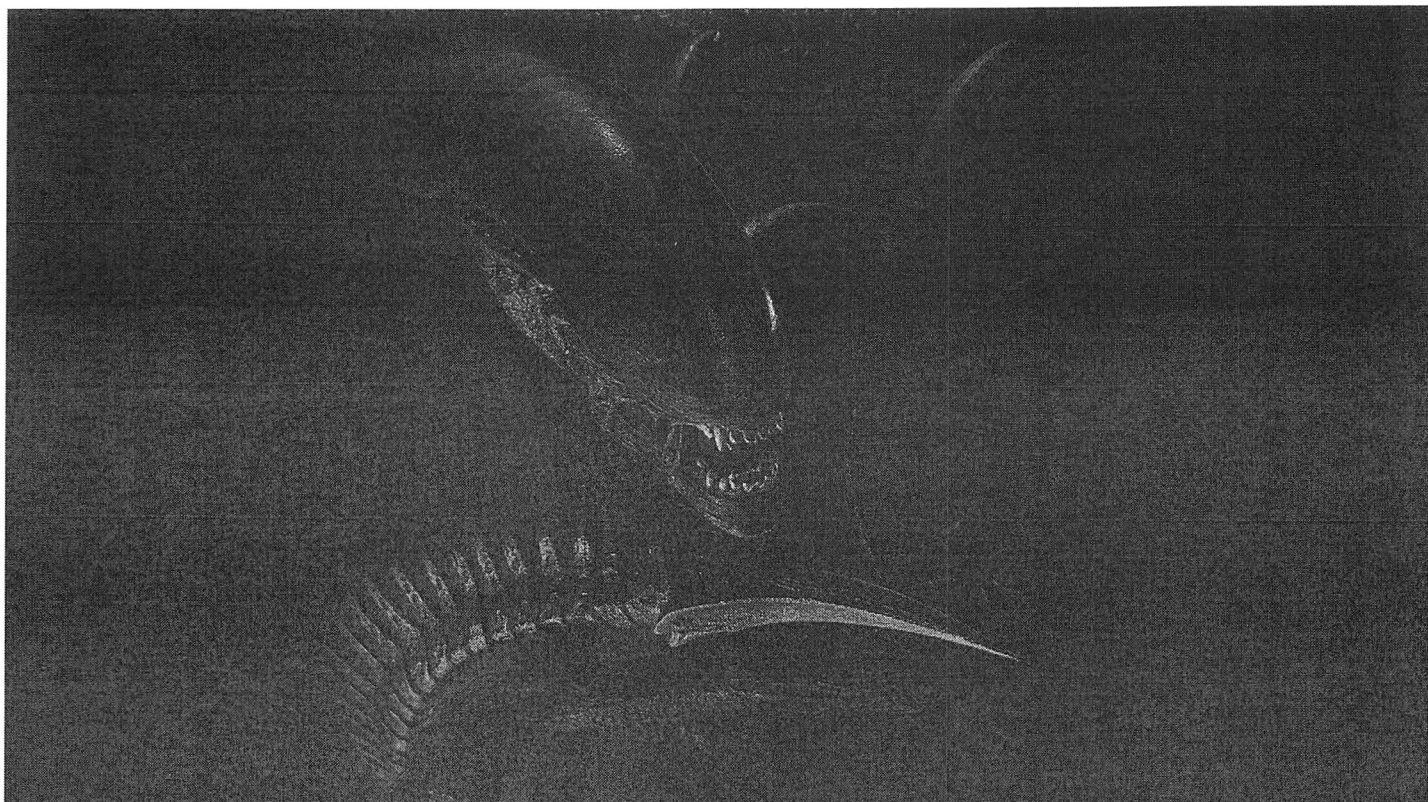
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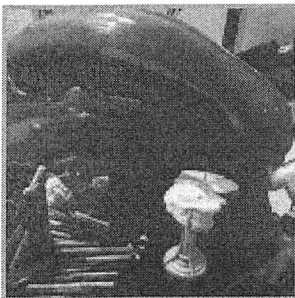
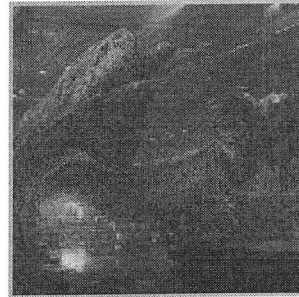
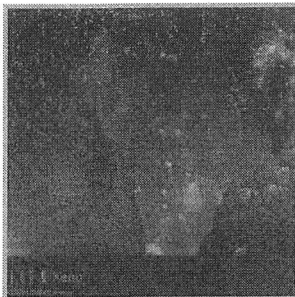
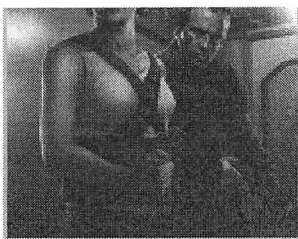


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Did you know that 20th Century Fox was working on a fifth installment of the *Alien* franchise? Nope, I don't mean a sequel to *Prometheus* or another *Aliens Vs. Predator*, a mean a proper *Alien 5*, with Sigourney Weaver returning as Ellen Ripley, presumably fighting off xenomorphs again. Well, it seems that neither did they, but as recently as March of last year, director Neill Blomkamp (*District 9*, *Elysium*) was working on a new *Alien* film, possibly to pitch to the studio, as he just posted a ton of concept art for the movie via his Instagram account.



There are interesting ideas in these images, like Ripley wearing some kind of xenomorph style helmet, the derelict ship from Ridley Scott's original film being dissected in some kind of hangar bay, and Hicks, Michael Biehn's character from *Aliens*, alive and well. Does this mean Blomkamp's proposed movie was looking to just ignore *Alien 3* and *Alien: Resurrection*? Considering both of those films' reputations with fans, I doubt if many folks would mind if both of those films end up just being nightmares Ripley had while in cryo-sleep.

So what makes anyone think this *Alien* film will turn out any better than the last two? Well, for a few years Fox had a bad reputation of being a micro-managing studio, one that simply didn't know how to handle their biggest franchises properly. It was during this era that we got the last two lackluster *Alien* films, Tim Burton's lame attempt at a *Planet of the Apes* reboot, and *X-Men: The Last Stand*/*X-Men:Origins Wolverine*.

However, due to regime changes at the studio over the last few years, Fox has made a pretty big turnaround. *X-Men: First Class* and *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* were terrific films that gave those two franchise a creative shot in the arm, which resulted in last year's equally excellent *X-Men: Days of Future Past* and *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*. Can Fox do the same creative turnaround with the *Alien* series? Outside of the *X-Men* and *Apes* movies, the *Alien* films are among Fox' most well known and profitable sci-fi franchises. It's not an IP they're going to let lay dormant forever, and there are worse choices to give it a proper revival than Neill Blomkamp.

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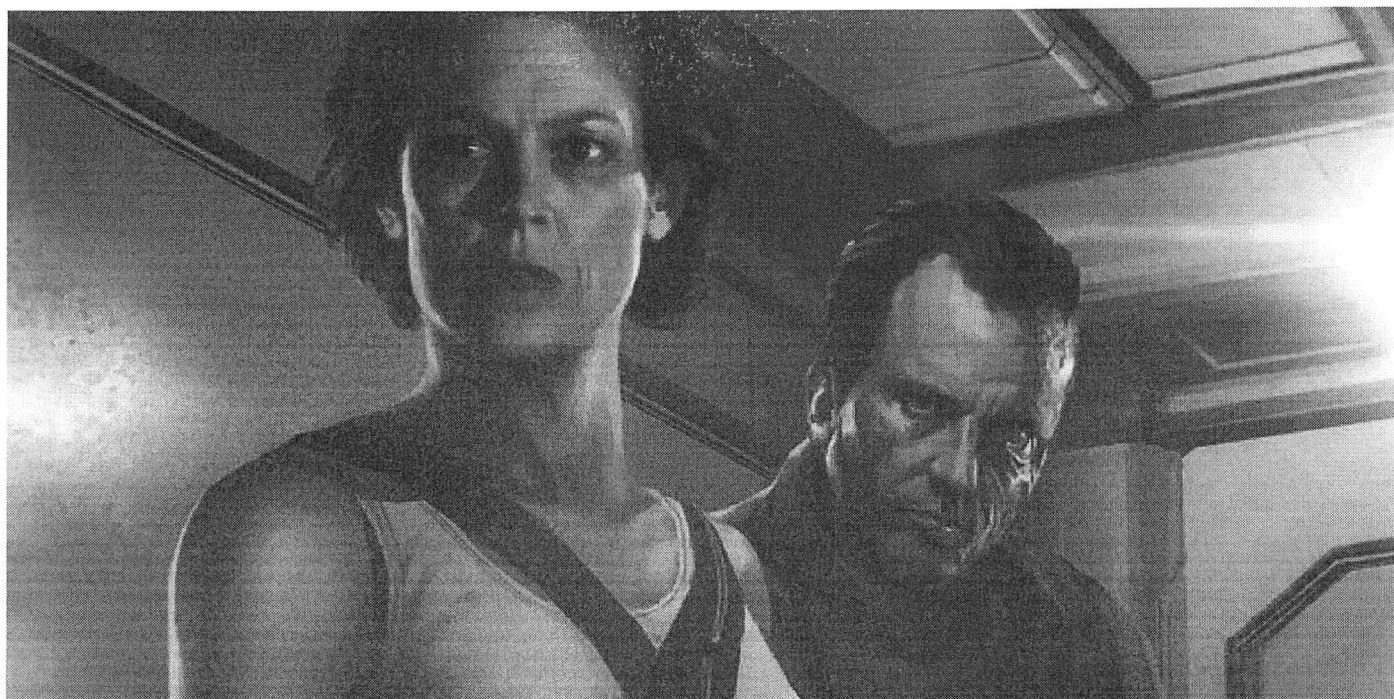
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Sigourney Weaver & James Cameron Praise Neill Blomkamp's Alien Sequel

- By [Daniel Ricwulf](#)
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Director Neill Blomkamp's (*District 9*, *Chappie*) proposed *Alien* sequel may be one of the biggest will they/won't they teasers in fandom right now. *Alien 3* decisively ended the journey of Nostromo survivor and xenomorph-slayer Lieutenant Ripley.

Alien: Resurrection managed to somehow continue that journey, postmortem.

Blomkamp's proposal will wipe out the timeline of those less-appreciated entries, picking up right after James Cameron's *Aliens*.

The story would see Sigourney Weaver's 'Ripley' return to Earth alongside her fellow survivors, the young girl 'Newt' and Corporal Hicks (Michael Biehn). The project was originally in active development by 20th Century Fox, only to be put on hold for original *Alien* director Ridley Scott's own franchise sequel: *Alien: Covenant*. But the movie's star is still talking up Blomkamp's ideas.

After rumors swirled that Scott's pseudo-prequel *Prometheus* was the reason for the delay, expected to tie that movie's story to the core series before adding a new chapter.

Weaver eventually confirmed as much: personally, explaining that Fox had delayed production – which “*was too bad because we would have already done it by now.*”

At San Diego Comic-Con 2016, Weaver spoke about her future in the franchise on the panel for *Aliens*' 30th anniversary:

“There is an incredible script by Neill. I didn't want to do a fifth one. I thought going to earth wouldn't be fun. I got this script that was amazing and gives fans everything they're looking for and innovates in ways that became part of the world for me. He has things to do and I have things to do. And I hope that we'll circle back around to do it once those things are done.”

Director James Cameron (*Avatar*) then went on to throw in his two cents, saying that Blomkamp's is "a very strong script" and "works gangbusters." Continuing on, he stated:

"I thought it was dumb [that Hicks and Newt were killed off]. I thought it was a huge slap in the face to the fans. I mean look, [David] Fincher's a friend of mine, and David is an amazing, amazing filmmaker, unquestionably. That was kind of his first big gig, and he was getting vectored around by the studio, and he dropped into the production late and they had a horrible script and they were rewriting it on the fly, and it was just a mess. I think it was a big mistake. So I certainly — had [producer Gale Anne Hurd and I] been involved, we would not have done that because we felt we earned something with the audience with those characters."





Considering how much Blomkamp's films have borrowed from the style of *Aliens*, he seems like an obvious choice for a follow-up to that series (though some fans have been concerned about the diminishing returns of his filmography, not to mention the rewriting of the series timeline). While the second half of the *Alien* anthology is decidedly less popular, "erasing" their legacy strikes some as sacrilege. It's one thing to retell or reboot a story for a new generation, but using the same cast to "undo" two whole chapters is a bit too far for some. Then again, Weaver and Cameron seem to be excited about the opportunity the film brings, so maybe that's enough to keep an open mind.

Are you looking forward to Blomkamp's possible rewrite of *Alien* history, or is it better this film never sees the light of day? Let us know your thoughts in the comments section and stay tuned to Screen Rant for updates on the *Alien* series as they hit.

Alien: Covenant opens in U.S. theaters on August 4th, 2017. We'll continue to keep you updated on Neill Blomkamp's **untitled *Alien* sequel**.

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RIDLEY SCOTT CLAIMS NEILL BLOMKAMP'S 'ALIEN 5' NEVER EVEN HAD A SCRIPT

MATTHEW MONAGLE | 25 Days Ago

Neill Blomkamp



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In hindsight, it seems kind of odd that we had two directors competing to make movies in the same franchise. Back in 2015, director Neill Blomkamp sort of bull-rushed Hollywood by releasing concept art from the *Alien 5* sequel he had been working on for 20th Century Fox. This was despite the fact that Ridley Scott had already made *Prometheus* — a direct prequel to the events of the *Alien* universe — and was working on what would later become *Alien: Covenant*. After months of rumors and Blomkamp's promise to bring back a few beloved characters, the project petered out, and Scott emerged the sole proprietor of the *Alien* franchise.

And with *Alien: Covenant* set to hit theaters this summer, Scott is going pretty hard on his feelings about Blomkamp's

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project. In an interview with French publication *Allocine* (via ScreenRant and Heroic Hollywood), Scott claimed that Blomkamp's film never even had a script to go along with its cool concept art:

“ I don't think it will ever see the light of day. There was never a script. Just an idea that evolved from a dozen or so pages. I had to participate as producer, but it didn't go farther because Fox decided it didn't want to do it. As far I was concerned, I had already done *Prometheus* and I was working on *Covenant*. ”

Of course, that's not what James Cameron — the *other* director to make an icon *Alien* movie—had to say about a possible *Alien 5* script. Back in 2016, Cameron claimed that Blomkamp had given him a copy of the script, even going so far as to say that it was “a very strong script, and he can go

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make it tomorrow." Cameron was even backed up by Sigourney Weaver, who spoke in-depth on several occasions about Blomkamp's "great" script. We seem to find ourselves in a bit of a "he said, she *and* he said" situation here.

All of which means one of two things: either Scott is right, and Cameron and Weaver were both a little too exuberant in describing Blomkamp's output as a "script," or Cameron and Weaver are right, and Scott is throwing some colossal shade on a filmmaker who he feels was encroaching on his territory. Or maybe they're all correct, and Blomkamp was very Machiavellian about what materials he showed and to whom? We've officially reached the point where I'd rather see a movie about the non-making of *Alien 5* than the film itself, because it sounds like more drama than any number of space monsters could provide.



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